

U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

contact: paoci@eur.army.mil
phone: 49-6221-57-5815 / DSN 370-5815
fax: 49-6221-57-6376 / DSN 370-6376



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SUCCESS IN IRAQ IS POSSIBLE, SAYS DEPUTY COMMANDER OF U.S. ARMY EUROPE'S 1ST ARMORED DIVISION

By Fred W. Baker III
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Success is possible in Iraq, a U.S. Army Europe senior commander there said, based on progress he has seen since his recent return to the country.



SPC JOHN CROSBY

Brig. Gen. James C. Boozer Sr. talks with Iraqi police Maj. Thamir Allawi, acting commander of the concerned local citizen security element at the CLC station in Tarmiyah, Iraq, Nov. 2. Boozer, deputy commander for maneuver for U.S. Army Europe's 1st Armored Division and deputy commander of Multi-National Division - North, told journalists Nov. 15 that success is possible in Iraq.

Speaking to a group of Internet journalists and "bloggers" via telephone from Iraq Nov. 15, Brig. Gen. James C. Boozer Sr. said he is "absolutely amazed" at improvements there since his return last month. This is his third tour in the country. Boozer is the deputy commander for maneuver for U.S. Army Europe's 1st Armored Division, serving here as deputy commander of Multi-national Division - North.

"This is a turning point. ... I think in the next 12 or 15 months ... that we're going to make history. We're going to allow the nation of Iraq to build itself," Boozer said. "I believe that we can have success in Iraq, that it is possible."

Boozer said he has seen "an absolute certain increase in capacity" in the Iraqi security forces since a previous tour there in 2004 and 2005.

Four Iraqi army divisions with about 55,000 soldiers operate in the nearly 50,000-square-mile area for which Boozer is responsible. About 80,000 Iraqi police operate there, along with 25,000 coalition forces.

Boozer called the Iraqi security forces some of the best he's seen. For the most part, he said, they are conducting independent operations at a brigade combat team level. "That is a large leap from what they were able to do back in 2004-2005," he said.

The commander said three elements are essential to continued progress in the region:

- Allowing provincial local governments the ability to dialogue with the central government;
- Transitioning Iraqi security forces so they can conduct independent operations; and
- Setting conditions for a stable economic environment so the economy can grow.

"We're doing nation-building here," he said. "We need to sustain and attain the security environment that we are currently enjoying."

Increased security has resulted in a decline in violence in the region, he said.

Also, a ground swell of local citizens is coming forward to help secure neighborhoods and join the Iraqi security forces.

"All of this is coming together at the right time and the right place, I think, where we can see success here in Iraq in the coming future," Boozer said.

Some al-Qaida cells have migrated north after being driven out of Baghdad by military operations there. But, Boozer said, his forces are pinpointing those cells.

"We believe that we have clearly disrupted al-Qaida here in MND-North, and we will continue to sustain that pressure on them. We believe that that they are on their heels, that we've certainly knocked the breath out of them. But they can still conduct vicious attacks, ... but they are isolated vicious attacks. They cannot bring together complex attacks like they could in the past," Boozer said.

Coalition forces also will continue working with the Iraqi army and police on their logistics abilities and sustainment capabilities, which are showing progress, as well, Boozer said.



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